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NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1500
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EUROPE AND THE SWEDISH MODEL

ANNCR:

THE DEFEAT OF SWEDEN'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AFTER FORTY-FOUR YEARS IN OFFICE IS BEING EXAMINED BY WEST EUROPEANS AS A POSSIBLE TREND-SETTER IN OTHER ELECTIONS. AT OUR WEST EUROPEAN BUREAU, VOA CORRESPONDENT WILLIAM MADE HAS THESE THOUGHTS:

VOICE:

ALREADY THE SWEDISH MODEL IS BEING CITED IN THE FEDERAL GERMAN ELECTIONS, WHERE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT IS BEING CHALLENGED BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. AND THE EXAMPLE IS BEING STUDIED IN BRITAIN, WHERE THE LABOR GOVERNMENT NOW WITH A THIN MAJORITY, FACES ELECTIONS IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS, AND IN FRANCE WHERE THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS ARE EVER HOPEFUL OF MOVING CLOSER TO OFFICE. SOME SEE THE FALL OF SWEDEN'S OLOF PALME AND HIS PARTY, AFTER SUCH A LONG REIGN, AS A SWING TO THE RIGHT FORETELLING MORE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS ELSEWHERE IN WESTERN EUROPE.

CLOSER EXAMINATION, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT THIS IS AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION. THE DOWNFALL OF THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IS CERTAINLY HISTORIC IN SWEDISH TERMS -- BUT NOT VERY SURPRISING. IN ALL IT'S FORTY-FOUR YEARS, THE PARTY FREQUENTLY WAS IN A MINORITY IN PARLIAMENT. IT SQUEEZED INTO OFFICE THREE YEARS AGO WITH THE TACIT SUPPORT OF NINETEEN COMMUNIST MEMBERS IN AN EVENLY DIVIDED HOUSE. THIS TIME IT FACED THE UNITED OPPOSITION OF THE THREE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES. AND WHEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS LOST SEVEN TENTHS OF ONE PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, THEY LOST THE ELECTION. THEY REMAIN THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE SWEDISH LEGISLATURE AND IF THE COALITION PARTNERS FALL OUT,

AS HISTER PALHE CONTENTS THEY WILL, THEN HE WILL BE BACK IN A CHALLENGING POSITION.

MOREOVER, WHILE THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS LOST THE ELECTION, SWEDEN'S MIDDLE WAY DID NOT. IN THEIR FORTY-FOUR YEARS IN OFFICE, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE NOT NATIONALIZED EVERYTHING IN SIGHT -- ONLY ABOUT FIVE PERCENT OF SWEDISH INDUSTRY IS GOVERNMENT OWNED, LESS THAN IN LABOR BRITAIN. AND THE ELECTION WAS NOT FOUGHT ON THE ISSUE OF SOCIALISM VERSUS CAPITALISM, BUT ON WHICH PARTIES CAN BEST MANAGE SWEDEN'S MIXED ECONOMY AND WELFARE STATE. IT WAS, IN SHORT, A DEMOCRATIC CONTEST BETWEEN THOSE IN OFFICE AND THOSE OUTSIDE, WITH THE ARGUMENT THAT SWEDEN NEEDED A CHANGE CARRYING AS MUCH WEIGHT AS ANYTHING ELSE. IDEOLOGY WAS LESS IMPORTANT -- AND THAT MAY BE A TREND FOR OTHER WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

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JS/CAK